

## Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARA-10 H-02 /013 W

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P 151651Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4756

UNCLAS CARACAS 11068

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, VE (W/W - AMERICAN CITIZEN ALEXANDER BERNHARD

SUBJECT: PRESUMPTIVE DEATH OF BERNHARD

REF: CARACAS 10218

1. MISSING CESSNA 206 FOUND SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 IN DENSELY FORESTED AREA NEAR EL JUNQUITO, WHICH IS LESS THAN AN HOUR'S DRIVE FROM CARACAS. ALTHOUGH NEWS REPORTS NOTE BERNHARD WAS ABOARD, CRASH IMPACT AND SUBSEQUENT FIRE REPORTEDLY OBLITERATED REMAINS TO POINT WHERE IDENTIFICATION IMPOSSIBLE, INCLUDING DENTAL VERIFICATION. AS A RESULT, VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES HAVE REFUSED TO ISSUE FINAL REPORT OF DEATH AND TRANSIT PERMIT, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SHIP REMAINS. REPORT OF PRESUMPTIVE DEATH OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN HAS BEEN COMPLETED FOR DEPARTMENT AND COPY FORWARDED TO BERNHARD'S FAMILY SO INSURANCE CLAIM CAN BE INITIATED.

2. BERNHARD'S LAWYER (CARL SKIBELL, 2700 MERCANTILE BANK BLD., DALLS, TEXAS) IS IMPATIENT OVER THE FACT THAT ALL FORMALITIES HAVE NOT BEEN CONCLUDED. WE HAVE EXPLAINED THAT BECAUSE PILOT DID NOT FILE FLIGHT PLAN WHEN HE LEFT SAN CARLOS AIRPORT, VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES REFUSE TO ISSUE DEATH CERTIFICATE UNTIL BERNHARD'S PRESENCE ON AIRCRAFT DEFINITELY ESTABLISHED. ABOUT ALL VENEZUELAN'S WILLING TO DO AT THIS POINT IS ISSUE PROBABLE REPORT OF DEATH IF GUARANTEE GIVEN THAT REMAINS WILL BE INTERRED LOCALLY.

3. PIPER REPRESENTATIVE HERE LEARNED SOMEONE IN SAN CARLOS (ABOUT 125 MILES FROM CARACAS) DROVE PILOT AND BERNHARD TO

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AIRPORT. THAT PERSON'S SWORN STATEMENT MIGHT HELP CLEAR UP

PRESENT DOCUMENTATION IMPASSE. EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS A TASK FOR  
MEMBER OF BERNHARD'S FAMILY OR LOCAL ATTORNEY, A COURSE WE  
WILL RECOMMEND WHEN THE LAWYER COMMUNICATES WITH US AGAIN.

4. GIVEN SKIBELL'S IMPATIENCE OVER IDENTIFICATION PROBLEM  
THE EMBASSY FELT CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF CASE WOULD BE HELPFUL  
IN RESPONDING TO CONGRESSIONAL OR OTHER INQUIRIES.  
VAKY

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